Riding Lesson

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Riding Lesson

by drinkbloodlikewine, whiskeyandspite

Summary

“It is only when we scout that you like me silent,” Galahad points out, to a brief hum from the knight holding him, shaggy hair and hooded eyes and expression that rarely seems to shift from neutral indifference.

*“It is when **I** scout that I need to be. You do not come to scout with me, you come for this.”*

“I come for you.”

Galahad follows Tristan when he scouts.

Notes

These two are certainly growing on us!

Written for Tristhad Week over on Tumblr.

A huge, huge, huge thank you to our beta reader noodletheelephant! Darling, you are amazing.

“You think he can’t do it himself? D’you hold it for him when he takes a piss, too?”

Bors’ voice rings out with a laugh at Galahad’s back, hardly enough to stop him as he goes, spurring his horse to a canter off in the direction that Tristan had gone.

In truth, he doesn’t doubt Tristan’s skills for a moment, despite how he expressed grave concern to Arthur about the man scouting alone.

“That’s rather the point of it,” Arthur replied. “If all of us went, it wouldn’t be scouting.”

“But two, alone, serve better than one. If there is an ambush by the Woads, and the single scout sent ahead is injured, who then will warn the remainder?”

“His bird?” Lancelot suggested with a shrug, but both only half-hearted. “I see the wisdom in it.”

Arthur met his gaze for a moment, and with a bow of his head and open palm, allowed Galahad his request. “Go then, and look after him,” he said. “But if he wishes you to let him work alone -”

“Then I’ll return at once,” Galahad quickly agreed, bowing lightly to hide the smile he felt tug at the corners of his eyes.

And so he goes now, with laughter behind him, towards the woods where Tristan disappeared within. The darkness of them is always a surprise, after riding so long in the open fields. It’s as if the sun is swallowed into night, a black sky of leaves and winding branches overhanging. There is little noise but for the crunch of leaves beneath his horse’s hooves, little movement but a shiver of wind that shakes the trees. It is eerie, riding alone, and he wonders how Tristan manages. Even his bird would be unseen here, high above the canopy.

Perhaps it’s just the childish worry of the unknown, seeing shadows and shapes where there are none, the mind conjuring fears and enemies to keep itself alert and alive. Galahad merely closes his eyes and pushes his horse to canter ahead, trusting him to find his way through the brittle fallen branches and dry leaves.

An hour, two, and still no Tristan. Surely he could not be so far ahead within the hour he had had before Galahad’s need to follow him had pulled like hooks against his skin. Surely he was still within reasonable distance to catch up. Galahad slows his horse with a tug to the reins and a click against his teeth, listening past the panting of his horse, past his own breath and the whispering of the forest.

Had he gone the wrong way? Had he made a turn where Tristan had gone straight ahead? Had he, instead, gone straight past a turn Tristan had taken?

He curses quietly, turns his horse in a circle and swings his head to try and catch the sounds of the forest that don’t belong in there. Like the snorting of his horse, the hum of his own blood through his ears, the beating of his heart that seems to speed and grow louder and louder, vibrating through the ground -

“You are distracting me,” Tristan tells him, angling his horse around where Galahad had stopped his own, and speeding ahead. “You could wake the forest with your pursuit,” he calls over his shoulder.

“Wait!” Galahad cries, to no avail. A quick breath fills him, and unleashes all at once as he squeezes his horse into pursuit. Ahead, Tristan moves with easy grace, as if at walk rather than a gallop, his hair flying long behind. Galahad leans across his horse’s neck, to urge him faster, breathless as he passes easily over uneven ground and risen roots, splashing through a rivulet of leaf-thick water.

“Tristan!” he calls out again, and he knows the damnable man can hear him, but he shows no reaction at all. Overheard, his falcon’s call pierces the air and Galahad looks to try and spot her. He sees only shadow on the sky, but hears a stark silence disrupt his attention. But for the heaving of his horse’s sides and his own breath in kind, there is no other noise.

More to the point, there is no Tristan, racing ahead of him.

Galahad slows the horse. He stops. He does not turn in a circle now, wary of before, but instead draws a breath to shout when Tristan’s horse sets her head into the path. Breath held, he frowns, watching her cross without the man atop, and it’s too late to shout out when he’s dragged from his horse with a hand across his mouth, and a grin against his ear.

“Noisy,” Tristan mutters.

He has little time to think of much beyond how glad he is that neither are in their full battle regalia, how much lighter and quieter it makes them both. Galahad struggles only because his instinct is to do so, not because he wishes particularly to get away. He watches his horse plod over to join Tristan’s, rubbing noses in greeting before both seek sweet grasses off the forest path. Neither will run off, too well trained to their hand, too familiar with each other and the sounds of forest and war to be scared off by either.

Hands grasp up over Tristan’s fingers to try and peel them away but they hold fast, and Galahad laughs, unrestrained and young, against them, cheeks hot with adrenaline and need both.

It is rare, now, that he does not follow, rarer still he does not find.

He is released only to be pressed to a tree, still supple and young, bending a little beneath Galahad’s weight, and Tristan’s too when he leans into him to replace calloused fingers with soft lips instead.

It’s just as effective at keeping the younger knight quiet, but for the little sounds that flutter like birdsong from between them. In this, too, Tristan is silent, but his smile pervades between the smooth movements of their mouths together. Knowing, clever, terribly pleased with himself and the surprise still wrought in ruby across Galahad’s cheeks. They relent in their siege against the sapling, when Tristan’s hands find the younger knight’s bare thighs, and Galahad pushes obediently from leather-clad toes to be held. He sits astride Tristan’s hips as if he were a horse, and settles calloused fingers against tattooed cheeks.

“You see how quiet you can be?” Tristan says, parting from the embrace with lips made red and shining from their fierce kiss.

“Only because you were kissing me.”

The older knight hums, gaze thinning in consideration. “Then I should do it more. It will be hard from horseback.”

Galahad just smiles at him, enough that his nose wrinkles and his eyes narrow; a challenge. He does not voice it, nor does Tristan need him to. They have ways beyond this for silence. Initially it had been rivalry, it had been anger and displeasure and the need to irk. Later it had been a compromise, a need for a need. Now… Galahad isn’t even sure he knows how to define their now.

“It is only when we scout that you like me silent,” Galahad points out, to a brief hum from the knight holding him, shaggy hair and hooded eyes and expression that rarely seems to shift from neutral indifference.

“It is when *I* scout that I need to be. You do not come to scout with me, you come for this.”

“I come for you.”

That pulls a small smile from the mask, and Tristan turns a little into the hands that hold him. He rubs one cheek there, scrubby with growth, then the other, like a dog seeking to bury its own scent, or to put its scent on something else. His eyes sharpen, as they do before he unleashes an arrow, and he turns and drops suddenly enough for Galahad to cling to him with a startled cry.

Tristan settles onto the fallen log beneath and brings his hands up higher beneath Galahad’s tunic, gripping bare thighs, and he finds a hand swatted for the trouble. Their eyes meet, competition growing in time with the quickening gait of their pulse, but to Galahad’s surprise, the older knight instead lifts his hands, feigning innocence with the younger perched with legs spread across his lap.

“You came for me,” Tristan says, eyes crinkled in their corners. “You found me. What will you do with me?”

Galahad considers the question, sitting astride the man who had taught him to fight, the man who had so oft stood above him with a bored expression and a slackened grip, entirely uncaring until Galahad had kicked his legs from under him out of sheer frustration.

Then he had directed darker eyes to the boy, and little had changed since.

"In truth," Galahad counters, "I came seeking you, but you found me." A tilt of his head, a slight grin and narrowed eyes. "Twice. So I direct your question back. What will you do with me, scout?"

With a preening, proud pleasure, Tristan lifts his chin and lowers his hands. Taunting in how languid he moves, he sets his fingers beneath Galahad’s knees. Fingers stiff and soft as well-

worn leather slip higher again, over bare thighs that tremble, tickled, at the touch. The stiff weave of Galahad's tunic and the leather flaps that lay across it snare on Tristan's wrists as he touches higher, higher, to cup the younger knight's plush rump through his loincloth.

Then beneath, seeking with clever fingers just beneath the folds of fabric. Across the bend where his backside meets his thighs, drawing a breath in time with Galahad when he gasps and squirms. He sets his hands against Tristan's shoulders, pushing booted toes against the soil to rise from his legs just a little, encouraging the scout's fingers higher.

They go, into a crevice so warm that Tristan's cheeks heat from it in turn, blinking wide-eyed from beneath lank, long hair.

"You did not wear bracae today."

"Took you this long to see I've got no pants on?" Galahad wonders, snorting amusement with a tilt of his head. "Some scout you are."

A tight squeeze in reprimand and Galahad just raises his eyes to the canopy above them. He wonders how far Tristan had scouted, if he was on his way back to circle around Galahad as he did. He knows for a fact that he *has* scouted already, done his work, found no enemy or issue ahead. Otherwise he would not be so distracted, even by Galahad.

"You will chafe as you ride," Tristan comments, and Galahad's eyes slip back to his again, brow up in genuine curiosity.

"As I ride the horse or you?" he asks.

If Tristan is surprised by the forwardness, he doesn't show it. Implacable and resolute, the scout merely shrugs a shoulder, and tightens his hands to spread Galahad a little wider.

"Both," he decides. "One will not help the other."

Tristan leans towards Galahad, eyes drifting closed as they meet in an agreeable kiss. Galahad's fingers work through the knotted strands of Tristan's hair and smooth it back from his face, as Tristan seeks deeper with his fingers, to circle the hot skin of the younger knight's opening. His lip is caught between Galahad's teeth, held there as if in warning, and the scout arches a brow.

He's released only to speak, but his words carry with them a grin, crooked and charmed, fascinated by the stubborn, willful man now blushing furiously in his lap.

"You'll learn to ride faster."

"Oh?"

Tristan nods, sage, and presses his mouth to Galahad's bearded jaw, whispering. "So that you'll be less far out than we are now. Your ride back will be uncomfortable."

Galahad just tosses his head, still the petulant child in moments of nervous flurry. He does not tense away from the man, shows in no other way what the idea makes him feel, but he is

fairly sure the older knight can feel it against his thigh.

“Teach me then,” he says, tugging the messy braids from Tristan’s face and holding fast, elbows set just behind his shoulders to keep his head tilted up to Galahad’s. “As you taught me to fight. And to ride my first horse.”

“Both took practice,”

“Until I was furious and in tears,” Galahad recalls, licking his lip between his teeth and releases it, red, again. “All training is a cruelty, all practice too harsh to allow you to see what it leads to until you get there.”

“Young and impatient,” Tristan chastens him.

“Stoic and practical,” Galahad replies. “Will you teach me, then? To ride faster?”

“Now?”

The question carries in the quiet of the woods, swept away in the only sound beside their hearts, a breeze that shakes the rafters of branches spanning endless overhead.

“Now -” Galahad begins, brows knit.

“You want me to teach you,” Tristan answers, his fingers stilled in their ceaseless, tickling fanning beneath Galahad’s subligaculum. “Shall I whistle for the horses?”

He draws a breath, but Galahad claps his hands across Tristan’s mouth. Laughing, he pushes their brows together, eyes closing as he kisses the back of his hand, as if it might pass through to the wide grin beneath his palms.

“You’re a fool.”

“You speak in words you don’t mean,” mumbles Tristan, eyes drawn up in amusement.

Again, his fingers spread, snaring the folds of loincloth to bring it lower, down around the younger knight’s thighs. The fabric catches on Galahad’s stiff cock, curved pink and bright as it bounces free against his belly.

“You certainly can’t ride like this,” Tristan adds as Galahad sinks back down to his lap.

“A good teacher would lead by example,” Galahad points out, uncaring, now, for being so exposed. The forest could care little for them, and with no danger seen, and then hours from camp it is unlikely anyone else would see them as they are.

And if they did… Galahad is surprised to find that *he* cares little. Let them.

“How should I ride?” he asks, leaning forward again. “Like a Woad? Bare and wild?”

Tristan’s smile is languid, hands seeking over him as they have so often done before. A strange ownership, a laying of claim with nothing more than tickling fingers and the

guarantee that another saw the touch. Galahad feels almost like one of Tristan's trinkets to find and keep.

He grasps Tristan's hand and sets it to himself, lips parting as he shivers from the sensation, clasps their fingers together and tightens them.

"Show me."

"This," Tristan purrs, as his hand tightens around Galahad's taut manhood, "is very distracting. Very bad for riding. We'll have to take care of this, first."

With a gasp, a loud whimper, a cry and a sigh all at once, Galahad lets himself be stroked, Tristan's touch as familiar as his own now, whether it's through his hair or along his arm to steady the pull of his bow, whether it's up bare thighs or between his legs or brushing beside the fire, unseen when they sit close enough together. He rocks upward into Tristan's hand and his own, still joined to tunnel his cock between their palms.

What Galahad lacks in substantial size, he makes up for in stiffness, in sheer enthusiasm, especially beautiful when his cheeks bloom florid red, when his full lips part with a thin clear line snapping between them, the barest hint of broad teeth before he clenches his jaw with a groan. Tristan lifts his other hand to twist through the wild spiraled curls atop his head, and bend the young knight back enough to watch his pulse hammer like hooves in his throat, to watch his neck jerk when he swallows.

"Faster," mutters Tristan, grinning.

Another groan pulls from low in Galahad's chest, and his hands seek up to grasp against Tristan's loose vest, the heavy leather softened by years of wear. He tugs and twists his fingers in it, eyes barely slits where they continue to watch Tristan, even with his head pulled back as it is.

He doesn't *obey*. He refuses to admit to himself that he would fall enough to obey, like a pup to an older hound. No, he acquiesces. He sees the reason behind the command and chooses to go along with the suggestion. So his hips push up against Tristan's hand faster, voice keens higher from him as he's held and stroked harder, twisting of wrists and pressing of fingers, his own muscles burning, screaming, with the effort of motion he's forcing through them.

He shudders when Tristan kisses his neck, tastes his pulse, quick and hammering for him, because of him.

"Tristan -"

The scout loosens his grip on the younger man's hair, he meets his eyes and holds them - sky connects with earth, blue with black in a flash of lightning as Tristan tightens his grip. Galahad loosens his own, to clutch to broad shoulders and feel the muscles move in quick jerks, stroking faster, faster, a thundering pace. The leather over his tunic flaps obscenely in echo to the whisper of skin against skin.

"Don't hold your voice now," Tristan scolds. "Use it to scare the Woads away."

Galahad cries out, shuddering, his pace erratic as much as Tristan's is driven, until he goes suddenly still with a little yelp, a whimper, and freezes, pulsing hot over the older knight's hand in flashes of heat, striping thick across steady fingers that pull him to release.

And only then do they slow, though their hearts still pound against their ribs. Breathless panting like the horses they push ceaselessly north, ribs heaving with the force of their exertion. Tristan's amusement, always present, lingers even still as he lets Galahad's cock slip soft from his fingers, and smears semen across his bare thigh.

"Now," he whispers, voice rough with wanting. "Now I can teach you to ride."

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